

AN INVESTIGATION ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EXECUTIVE PERSONNEL OF THE PARTY IN POWER FOR A LONG TIME IN TURKEY ON THE CRISIS PERCEPTION/MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT RESULTING FROM DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

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Abstract

Due to their organizational structure, political organizations come face to face with crises and conflicts much more frequent than other organizations. Besides having to manage the internal crises and resolve inner-party conflicts, they are also expected to manage the social crises and offer solutions to the conflicts that beset the country they govern. The final sample of the study consisted of 480 people who occupied an executive position in the ruling party and also agreed to participate in the study. The study that was designed in relational survey model used data collection form, crisis management test and crisis management scale, Identify Conflict Style Scale. The study found a statistically significant positive relationship between the total average scores scored in the Crisis Management Scale and those obtained in the Crisis Management Test ($r=0,426$, $p=0,000$). On the other hand, a statistically significant positive relationship was also found between the Crisis Management Scale and the subscales of avoiding ($r=0,737$, $p=0,000$), forcing ($r=0,738$, $p=0,000$), accommodating ($r=0,764$, $p=0,000$), compromising ($r=0,746$, $p=0,000$) and confronting ($r=0,777$, $p=0,000$) of the Identify Conflict Style Scale ($p<0,05$). To manage crises and to offer solutions to conflicts, conflict resolution styles of avoiding, forcing, confronting, compromising and accommodation have been used, which, however, have yielded no effective results. Hit by a crisis,

individuals successfully get through it, even being empowered in the end. Individuals in party administration, on the other hand, do consider the crisis as an area of quarrel and attempt to offer solutions in line with this perception, with the result that the crises are not perceived and experienced as a means of empowerment by the entire personnel in administrative positions.

Key words: Crisis management, administrative position, empowerment, conflict resolution, scale

Introduction

Crises can, in most cases, pose a threat to key objectives of organisations, sometimes even putting their existence in jeopardy. Crises are therefore conditions where quick action should be taken. In public administration, natural or human-made crises can hit all the levels of staff. All the executives active in public administration must, therefore, have adequate knowledge and skills to manage crises and conflicts.

Some of the essential components of an effective crisis and conflict management are as follows:

Crisis management strategy and organisation (authority and control),

Communication plan of crisis management organisation,

Strategy and plan for media and public relations,

Preparation of the infrastructure of crisis management is a component of essential importance (Can 1997; Demirtaş, 2000; Narbay, 2005).

Acting in line with the hierarchy, usage of authority and control of the process taken by one single person in all cases are of great importance in crisis situations. Lack of correct-exact/clear and up-to-date information, failure to remove all the obstacles that hamper communication and lack of success in performing the activities in respect of administrative and organisational aspects can render the crisis insoluble instead of offering solutions (Tutar, 2000; Aksu, A., Deveci, S., 2009).

Besides being a reality in every sphere of human life, conflicts are a component constantly present in organisational structures as well. Differences in individuals and differences in goals and differing ways to reach goals as well as different views on values, perceptions and problems can pave the way for conflicts in organisations. It is a fact that it

is almost impossible to completely eliminate conflicts. However, the personnel in executive positions should have the knowledge and skills to ensure the largest consensus possible and be able, thus, to manage conflicts and offer solutions. Party leaders who manage to remain in power for long periods are those who can minimise conflicts and manage to maintain them at the most minimum level possible (Koçel,2002, Şimşek, 2002).

Crises are an ever-occurring and inevitable phenomenon in governments. Should the conflicts arising during a crisis cannot be prevented and even get worse, new crises would inevitably emerge, causing great damage in the end. Conflicts can be prevented when those in administrative and executive positions can properly exercise authority in line with the hierarchical order and display administrative and managerial skills particularly in respect of communication. In this way, while no new crises would emerge, existing ones would be taken under control, and life would return to normal in a short time (Kadıbeşgil, 2001;Yavaş, 2004;Can, 2005; Aksu,A.,Deveci,S., 2009).

If those in executive positions can duly exercise authority and have administrative skills particularly in communication, no unrest occurs or any conflict is taken under control, and things return to normal in a short time. The correlations between crisis/conflict management and management need, therefore, to be made clear. The aim of this study is to investigate the methods used by political organisations, which are themselves expected to solve social crises and conflicts, to manage and solve inner crises.

Method

The population of the study consisted of the staff working in the ruling party in Turkey. Of this population, 480 individuals who were informed about the study and agreed to participate in the study on the basis of voluntary contribution made up the final sample of the study. The study used a socio-demographic data collection form designed by the researchers based on observation and models available in previous research as well as crisis management test, crisis management scale and Identify Conflict Style Scale.

The data collection form was developed by the researchers on the basis of ethnographic observation and models available in the literature, with seven items on socio-demographic data, six on crises, three on political organisations and seven on conflicts.

The Crisis Management Scale (CMS) used in the study was developed by Aksu and Deveci³⁴ in form of a five-point Likert scale with 31 items. The options used to measure crisis management skills were designed as; (1) 'Totally Disagree' (score range between 1.00 and 1.79), (2) 'Disagree' (score range between 1.80 and 2.59), (3) 'Neutral' (score range from 2.60

to 3.39), (4) 'Agree' (score range between 3.40 and 4.19) and (5) 'Totally Disagree' (score range between 4.20 and 5.00). The scale comprises three sub-dimensions as pre-crisis period, crisis period and post-crisis period. While the alpha reliability co-efficient was set at .98 for the whole scale, it was set at .95, .95 and .98 for the sub-dimensions of pre-crisis period, crisis period and post-crisis period respectively.

The Identify Conflict Style Scale (ICSS) used in the study was first developed by Johnson and Johnson (1981) and was subjected to several revisions in the following years; the latest revised version dates back to 2008 [Johnson and Johnson (2008)]. It is a scale used to identify the behavioural patterns used by individuals to cope with a conflict. ICSS has been frequently acknowledged in literature and used in different cultures to measure coping behaviours used in conflict situations. It has also been adapted into various languages. It consists of 35 items, all designed in the format of an affirmative sentence with the following five subscales:

Avoiding [Believing that the situation is hopeless, one of the parties ignores the conflict and prefers not to confront the other party];

Forcing [Opposing to the excessive burden during a conflict, one party lays greater emphasis on aims than relationships]

Accommodating [One of the parties withdraws from the conflict environment in order to sustain the relationship]

Compromising [In this case the parties try to find a common path in a conflict in line with the aims and relationships]

Confronting [It is the behavioural pattern where parties value the aims and relationships and try to find solutions that would benefit all the parties involved in a conflict with focus on the positive aspects]

The scale aims at providing insights into the dominant behaviour style used by individuals to cope with a conflict. No scoring was performed on the basis of the entire scale. The dominant action styles involved in sub-scales are measured independently from other sub-scales. Thus, in assessing the scores obtained in the scale, the score which individuals get in each sub-scale was obtained by adding item scores recorded in each sub-scale. The scores obtained in the sub-scales varied between 5 and 35. The scale was designed and scored in form of a five-point Likert scale with the statements (1) I never behave in this way, (2) I rarely behave in this way,

(3) I sometimes behave in this way, (4) I often behave in this way and (5) I mostly behave in this way. The validity and reliability of the Identify Conflict Style Scale were tested in various studies.

To test the construct validity of the scale, first the data collected were subjected to a factor analysis with Kaiser Meyer Olkin = .69 and Bartlett [$p < 0.1$] tests, which revealed that the scale consisted of five subscales. The factor loads of the items varied between 0.37 and 0.87. The eigenvalue of the scale in five sub-scales was measured as 12.45 and the explained variance percentage as 72.59. The item-total correlations of the scale were performed by comparing the scores obtained in each item with those obtained in the entire scale. The correlation co-efficient obtained for each item of the scale varied between 0.28 and 0.93. The study found, on the basis of the sequencing of the raw scores obtained in the distinguishing aspects of the scale items based on the related sub-scale from top to bottom,

that distinctiveness powers of the items obtained by calculating the independent groups t-test values of the score averages of the groups that form the top 27% and the bottom 27% were of distinctive character [$p < .05$]. In respect of the internal consistency level of the scale, the Cronbach Alpha value for the sub-scales varied between 0.84 and 0.89. In the test-retest method applied to test the stability of the scale over time, on the other hand, the total score correlation co-efficient was calculated as 0.76 (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). These results suggest that the scale is adequately valid and reliable. Consequently, this study sought to adopt into Turkish language the Identify Conflict Style Scale used in research on conflicts all over the world as a valid and reliable scale.

The ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Commission of Cyprus Near East University under the reference number YDÜ/SB/2017/5.

Statistical Analysis

The package program of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 23.0 was used for the statistical assessment of the study data. The study used frequency distributions for descriptive statistics and arithmetic average for continuous variables. Other values used were median value and standard deviation value. The comparison of qualitative data was made using chi-square test, and where necessary Fisher's exact test was also used. The study used Kolmogorov Smirnov test to examine whether the variables displayed normal distribution. As the groups that consisted of the sample were not normally distributed Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were used to compare the groups. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to define the predictors of the total scores of the Crisis Management Test and the Crisis Management scale. Significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Findings

Table 1 shows the demographic and personal data about the study subjects. Of the participants, 25.2% were at the age group of 34-41. On the other hand, 34.6% were women, and 67.6% were married. Asked about their family type, 73.7% expressed living in a nuclear family. While 83.6% of the sample could define what a crisis is, 72.7% could state the meaning of the notion of authority. Asked about whether delegation of authority would lead to a crisis, while 24.2% said it would lead to a crisis, 34.3% expressed that it would have an effect on the party. As for the participation in training programmes about conflict management, 88.2% expressed not having participated in any training programmes in this field.

The scores obtained in the scales (Crisis Management Test, Crisis Management Scale and Identify Conflict Style Scale) administered to the study subjects are set out in Table 2. The score obtained in the crisis management test was 42.93 ± 18.03 . The sub-scales of the crisis management scale in which the participants had the highest score averages were "the prevention of further damage" (34.36 ± 7.86) and "detection of warning signs" (32.39 ± 7.43). The subscale "trouble-shooting and recovery" (17.00 ± 5.33) turned out to be the one in which the lowest average scores were recorded. While, on the other hand, the

highest average score was recorded in the conflict management style “accommodating”, the lowest score was obtained in the style “avoiding” (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the analysis of the scales administered to the participants broken down by socio- demographic variables. The scale scores broken down by age and gender displayed no significant difference. While the scores of the married participants in the “avoiding” and “compromising” sub-scales of ICSS were significantly higher than the ones obtained by the single subjects, the participants living in extended families also had significantly higher scores in the same subscale than those living in a fragmented family (Table 3). In the “forcing” subscale of ICSS, the scores of the participants with a university degree were higher than those obtained by the subjects who were elementary school graduates. The results of the crisis management test show, on the other hand, that the subjects living in a nuclear or an extended family and those with a university degree had significantly higher scores than those who lived in fragmented families and the participants who were high school graduates respectively (Table 3).

Table 4 shows the results of the assessment of the total scores recorded in the Crisis Management Scale and the Crisis Management Test using multiple linear regression analysis. In the model in which the total score recorded in the crisis management scale was taken as a dependent variable, each of the subscales of “accommodating” and “confronting” of ICSS served as significant predictors. The variables that predicted the crisis management were, on the other hand, advanced age and the subscale of “accommodating” of ICSS (Table 4).

Discussion

Although, in the management of crises, the subscales of ‘the prevention of further damage’ and ‘detection of warning signs’ are relatively better to practise, ‘trouble-shooting and recovery’ is more difficult than other subscales. While the subscale of ‘accommodating’ is the most used conflict management style, the subscale of ‘avoiding’ is the one that is used at the least. Kıldak et al. (2011) report that executive personnel prefer to use the conflict management styles of reconciliation, use of power and avoiding when compared with other personnel. In our study, however, the one mostly used by the participating executive personnel was the style of ‘accommodating’. However, the styles of integration and reconciliation ensure the harmony for an organisational change that requires more participation and also lead to a democratic environment by striking a balance between the parties involved. The styles of integration and reconciliation are considered to be styles with more positive aspects, which better enable the parties involved to resolve conflicts. It is suggested that they should therefore be taken into account in political contexts more frequently than other styles (De Dreu et al. 2000; Munighan et al. 2001) .

Hit by a crisis, individuals successfully get through it, being empowered in the end. Individuals in executive positions in the party, on the other hand, do consider the crisis as an area of quarrel and attempt to offer solutions in line with this perception, with the result that the crises are not perceived and experienced as a means of empowerment by the entire management.

The nuclear family type was in a better situation in crisis management than the fragmented family type. While the study found, on the basis of the variables of age and civil status, no difference in terms of effective crisis management, it showed, however, that individuals with better education were able to manage crises more effectively. Even though the results show that better education led to more success in managing crises and conflicts, 88.2% of the participants had received no training in this respect. Besides, more than half of the participants (56.5%) were graduates of elementary school and high school.

Our study provided evidence that nuclear families managed crises better than extended and fragmented families. This result may be attributed to the fact that the individuals in an extended family have an area of responsibility more minor than those living in a nuclear family. It is also a fact that the families of individuals who cannot manage crises and conflicts in an effective way do inevitably get fragmented eventually.

The study demonstrated that married individuals preferred to use the avoiding styles when compared with single participants, a fact that might be attributed to their responsibility against and fears for their family. While better educated people tended to use the forcing style, married people used the compromising styles more than the single ones. Living in an extended family might have helped to make compromising easier.

Those who have authority resolve the crisis, and, expressing that crisis has been successfully resolved, all other individuals in executive positions internally experience it, making use of conflict management styles.

Crises appear not to have much effect on the inner-party coordination. The most important reason for this may be that top people in the party exercise all the authority in all significant matters, with top executives who take all decisions on their own authority. However, such a mode of operation characterised with decisions taken in the central office by top people do have a negative effect on the quality of the decisions taken by other executives in lower positions, on the grounds that their knowledge and experiences are thus undervalued, a condition that renders incoming information insufficient and inconsistent. On account of such reasons, crises previously considered easily resolvable get worse over time and can no more be eliminated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Crises are defined as situations that disorder the functioning of institutions and organisations. A political party in power can be considered as an enterprise and its administrators as managers serving in a political enterprise, from which it follows that political parties have to be able to detect and manage the conflicts and crises that can arise in case of a delegation of authority. However, the results of our study revealed that the majority (88.2%) of the participants had received no training in respect of conflict

management, with very low (45/100) scores in crisis management. Political parties should reinforce and develop their existing crisis plans on the basis of their own experiences and those of other parties that are able to efficiently manage crises and conflicts. Individuals in administrative positions in a political party should be offered trainings to address their lack of knowledge in respect of crises and crisis management; this is especially true in situations in connection with delegation of authority. Performing the same study with various groups in top, middle and lower administrative positions including party members that have no function in the administration of the party can provide new insights.

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Table 1: Demographic data and personal information about the participants (n=373)

Variable	N	%
Age		
18-25	77	20,6
26-33	74	19,8
34-41	94	25,2
42-49	65	17,4
Over 50	63	16,9
Gender		
Women	129	34,6
Men	244	65,4
Civil Status		
Married	252	67,6
Single	113	30,3
Widow / Divorced	8	2,1
Family Type		
Nuclear	275	73,7
Extended	89	23,9
Fragmented	9	2,4
Educational Background		

Elementary School	87	23,3
High School	124	33,2
University	145	38,9
Postgraduate Degree	17	4,6
Profession		
Civil Servants	15	4,0
Retired	21	5,6
Farmer	9	2,4
Worker	16	4,3
Self-employed	62	16,6
Others	250	67,0
Position in the political organisation		
Representative at Quarter Level	86	23,0
Head	24	6,4
Staff in Quarter Office	9	2,4
Members of Youth Wing	23	6,1
Council Member	3	0,8
Others	228	61,1
Length of Service in the Party		
Less than 10 years	283	75,8
11-20 years	73	19,5
21-30 years	11	2,9
Over 31 years	6	1,6
Those who could define the notion of crisis		
Yes	312	83,6
No	61	16,4
Those who could define the notion of authority		
Yes	271	72,7
No	102	27,3
Those who have experienced a crisis in the organisation		

Yes	51	13,7
No	322	86,3
Those who have experienced a case of a delegation of authority		
Yes	99	26,5
No	274	73,5
Whether a crisis arose as a result of delegation of authority (n=99)		
Yes	24	24,2
No	75	75,7
Whether a crisis that arose as a result of delegation of authority affected the party (n=99)		
Yes	34	34,3
No	65	65,7
Those who have or have not received training on conflict management		
Yes	44	11,8
No	329	88,2

Table 2: Scores obtained in the scales administered to study subjects

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Crisis Management Test	42,93	18,03	45,00	0,00	95,00
Crisis Management Scale					
Prevention of further damage	34,36	7,86	36,00	5,00	45,00
Learning	29,26	7,13	31,00	0,00	40,00
Detection of warning signs	32,39	7,43	33,00	7,00	45,00
Preparation and prevention	22,91	7,93	21,00	2,00	48,00

Trouble-shooting and recovery	17,00	5,33	17,00	2,00	30,00
Crisis Stage	9,11	3,22	9,00	0,00	15,00
Total	145,07	25,78	147,00	46,00	221,00
Identify Conflict Style Scale					
Avoiding	19,52	6,35	20,00	1,00	35,00
Forcing	22,08	5,36	22,00	5,00	35,00
Accommodating	23,81	6,44	25,00	3,00	35,00
Compromising	23,43	6,05	23,00	1,00	35,00
Confronting	23,57	5,84	23,00	0,00	35,00

Table 3 Analysis of the scales administered to the study subjects by socio-demographic variables

Variable	CMT	CMS	ICSS Avoidi ng	ICSS Forci ng	ICSS Accomm odating	ICSS Compro mising	ICSS Confr onting
Age 1							
18-25	X2=7, 50 p=0,112	X2= 7,98 p=0,092	X2=3, 24 p=0,518	X2=6, 98 p=0,137	X2=3,18 p=0,528	X2=5,79 p=0,215	X2=0, 86 p=0,929
26-33							
34-41							
42-49							
Over 50							
Gender 2							
Women	Z=- 0,76 p=0,445	Z=- 0,16 p=0,866	Z=- 0,29 p=0,769	Z=- 1,59 p=0,110	Z=-0,05 p=0,958	Z=-0,78 p=0,431	Z=- 0,41 p=0,681
Men							
Civil Status							
Married a	X2=5, 95 p=0,051	X2= 5,08 p=0,079	X2=9, 20 p=0,010	X2=2, 45 p=0,294	X2=3,51 p=0,173	X2=11,1 7 p=0,004	X2=5, 01 p=0,081
Single b							
Widow/Divorced			a>b*			a>b*	
Family Type 1							

Nuclear family d	X2=13,75 p=0,001	X2=25,60 p=0,000	X2=8,14 p=0,017	X2=5,43 p=0,066	X2=4,87 p=0,087	X2=9,02 p=0,011	X2=3,99 p=0,135
Extended familie	d>f* e>f*	d>f e>f*	d>f e>f*			d>f e>f*	
Fragmented family f							
Educational Background 1							
Elementary School k	X2=17,09 p=0,001	X2=4,94 p=0,176	X2=4,66 p=0,198	X2=15,58 p=0,001	X2=6,38 p=0,094	X2=4,76 p=0,189	X2=5,97 p=0,113
High School l	m>k m>l*	m>n	k<l k<m*	k<l k>n	m>l	k<l	k<m
University m							
Postgraduate n							

1 Kruskal Wallis test was administered. 2Mann Whitnet U test was administered.

*Those with significance also sustained after Bonferroni correction test

CMT: Crisis Management Test; CMS: Crisis Management Scale; ICSS: Identify Conflict Style Scale

Table 4: Assessment of the total scores recorded in the Crisis Management Scale and the Crisis Management Test using multiple linear regression analysis

	Crisis Management Scale Total Scores			Crisis Management Test Total Scores		
	β (Beta)	t	p	β (Beta)	t	p
Fix		10,884	0,000		-0,8269	0,40
Age	0,014	0,297	0,767	0,112	2,4505	0,01
Gender (Women=1/Men=2)	-0,019	-0,419	0,675	-0,042	-0,9331	0,35
Educational background (Elementary school=1/ Postgraduate=6)	-0,010	-0,219	0,827	0,062	1,3653	0,17
ICSS – Avoiding	0,071	1,078	0,282	0,121	1,8742	0,06

ICSS – Forcing	0,092	1,243	0,215	0,074	1,018	0,30
ICSS – Accommodating	0,161	2,268	0,024	0,155	2,234	0,02
ICSS – Compromising	0,033	0,372	0,710	0,107	1,211	0,22
ICSS – Confronting	0,236	3,013	0,003	0,148	1,927	0,05
F	16,495			18,816		
p	0,000			0,000		
R2	0,266			0,293		

ICSS: Identify Conflict Style Scale